

1.95
L11 Pc

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

PRELIMINARY REPORT

ON

MIGRATORY WORKERS

IN THE COTTON AREAS OF

NEW MEXICO

PREPARED BY

M. S. KISTIN

LABOR DIVISION

May, 1941

This document has been prepared for the use of officials of the Farm Security Administration in their consideration of the problem with which it deals. Any opinions expressed are those of the author. This report is not intended for general circulation and the publication of its contents in whole or in part is forbidden.

138BA
1.13

JAN 8 1946

1000
1000

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Summary and Conclusions.....	1 - 4
Cotton Farms in New Mexico.....	5 - 8
The Need for Outside Labor.....	9 - 15
Extent of the Additional Labor Requirement.....	16 - 18
The "Labor Shortage", 1940.....	19
The Future Labor Requirement.....	20 - 22
Composition of Migrant and Resident Farm Labor Popula- tion.....	23 - 29
Income, Days Worked, and Wages.....	30 - 33
Housing.....	34 - 38
Health.....	39 - 40
Education.....	41 - 45
Social Participation.....	46 - 47
Community Attitudes.....	48 - 50

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Dona Ana County has five times as many cotton farms as Chaves County, but less than twice as much acreage in cotton. This is because Dona Ana has much smaller holdings.

2. With smaller and many more holdings, Dona Ana County has a larger local labor supply and consequently needs less additional outside labor during harvest time.

3. Even with improved methods of recruiting and employing labor, both areas would still be dependent upon an outside labor supply.

4. Under conditions as of 1940, an additional force of 1500 cotton pickers is required in Dona Ana County and at least 2300 in Chaves County. This would mean a total migrant population of at least 2200 persons in Dona Ana County of which 150 would normally be unattached workers; and a total migrant population of about 4000 in Chaves County of which 350 would normally be unattached workers.

5. Chaves County will continue to require approximately the same amount of additional labor. Because of the expansion in 1941 of long staple cotton, Dona Ana County will require more outside labor than ever before.

6. Housing facilities generally are rather sufficient nor adequate to provide a minimum decency of shelter and living conditions for migratory workers in either of the two counties surveyed.

7. Especially in view of the poor housing and living conditions, wages in cotton in New Mexico are not sufficiently attractive to invite and keep a relatively stable outside labor force for the harvest.

1. When do you think is the latest you should be through with your harvest? Why?
2. Do you use tractors or teams?
3. Do you think the harvest can be handled in this area without migrant pickers? (Within the time as indicated in answer to question 1, above.)

The sample of 49 farm operators enumerated with the farm operator schedule indicated the following opinion regarding the time the harvest season should be completed:

By the end of December -- 27 farmers
 (By November 15 -- 1 farmer;
 November 15 -- 30 -- 1 farmer;
 By December 15 -- 3 farmers;
 December 15 to 30 -- 22 farmers.)

By January 15 -- 10 farmers.

By the end of January -- 5 farmers.

A scattering of opinion as follows:

"January" -- 1 farmer
 "December 14 to January 15" -- 1 farmer
 "January to February" -- 1 farmer
 "February" -- 1 farmer

No response reported -- 3 farmers

Opinion seems for the most part to limit the end of the season to the end of December. Although some variation existed, the general opinion seemed to be for tractor farmers to be willing to consider the season in view of their ability to work their land more

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

The University of Chicago is a private research university in Chicago, Illinois. It was founded in 1837 and is one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in the United States. The university is known for its commitment to academic excellence and its diverse student body. It has a long history of producing world-class scholars and leaders in various fields of study. The university's campus is located in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, and it is home to some of the most famous buildings in the city. The University of Chicago is a member of the Ivy League and is ranked among the top universities in the world. It is a place where students can expect to receive a world-class education and where they can pursue their passions and interests. The university's commitment to academic excellence is reflected in its high standards for admission and its rigorous curriculum. The University of Chicago is a place where students can expect to receive a world-class education and where they can pursue their passions and interests.

The University of Chicago is a private research university in Chicago, Illinois. It was founded in 1837 and is one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in the United States. The university is known for its commitment to academic excellence and its diverse student body. It has a long history of producing world-class scholars and leaders in various fields of study. The university's campus is located in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, and it is home to some of the most famous buildings in the city. The University of Chicago is a member of the Ivy League and is ranked among the top universities in the world. It is a place where students can expect to receive a world-class education and where they can pursue their passions and interests. The university's commitment to academic excellence is reflected in its high standards for admission and its rigorous curriculum. The University of Chicago is a place where students can expect to receive a world-class education and where they can pursue their passions and interests.

The University of Chicago is a private research university in Chicago, Illinois. It was founded in 1837 and is one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in the United States. The university is known for its commitment to academic excellence and its diverse student body. It has a long history of producing world-class scholars and leaders in various fields of study. The university's campus is located in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, and it is home to some of the most famous buildings in the city. The University of Chicago is a member of the Ivy League and is ranked among the top universities in the world. It is a place where students can expect to receive a world-class education and where they can pursue their passions and interests. The university's commitment to academic excellence is reflected in its high standards for admission and its rigorous curriculum. The University of Chicago is a place where students can expect to receive a world-class education and where they can pursue their passions and interests.

spent several thousand dollars improving housing facilities for his regular and migrant workers. He finds, as a result, that families remain longer - more likely to remain until end of season - so that there is less turn over during season as in previous years - Housing problem has been solved, according to the overseer of the farm - but he predicts that in 2 years they will be in a state of disrepair again as families have no sense of responsibility and mutilate walls, etc. Also, sanitation problem has not been solved for same reason.

Chaves County

Sharing tourist cabin with another family (relatives) ... One small room 6 x 9 and smaller sleeping porch. So cold their beds had to be moved into front room - (6 adults and infant sleeping in this room). Could find no employment on a farm which had housing accommodations - "Plenty of work, but no place to stay." Forced to rent tourist cabin with relatives. Cook together.

Rents 1 room house with another picker in Dexter. Each pays \$1 week. Up to October 28, 1940, lived in 2 room house with another regular worker on farm. Was forced to move by operator to make room for 2 large migrant families for cotton picking season. Resents being forced out and to pay rent because of inadequate housing facilities on farm for its workers.

Family (of eight) occupies 3 room frame house, provided by operator, which is in such state of total disrepair as to be utterly uninhabitable. The windows are broken, the walls are completely covered with rotted newspapers because of the cracks, the roof is almost entirely gone. The floors are broken, the entire atmosphere dismal - Subject states he offered to fix up the place if operator provided materials - operator is "considering" this, but according to subject promised to repair place for last occupant for 2 years without doing so. (Reason last occupant left)

No house provided for a group of single men (mostly boys). Subject sleeps with 8 younger men... in a wood-shed; no beds; straw on floor; place overrun with rats; no door.

...ing program for migratory workers is amply
...d both by the deplorable facilities currently available and
...
providing decent housing for seasonal workers during the September-
December harvest period, consideration must also be given to the families
who remain after the season and become part of the ever-increasing
population in both counties.

During the months following harvest, many migrant families
remain to take advantage of whatever relocation possibilities they
can find. They live in quarters no better than those provided for
migrants during harvest season. There is much movement up and down
the valleys as these families constantly seek better housing as well
as better jobs. And the result of this movement is an instability
among resident as well as migratory workers in both counties. A labor
home program combined with migrant facilities would therefore be
essential as a basis for improving the standards among resident as
well as migratory workers, and as another major step in the direction
of stabilizing the total labor supply.

HEALTH

In the course of the New Mexico survey the health problem was viewed at first within the framework of poor housing, inadequate sanitary facilities, and improper diet. These are the general conditions that combine to undermine the physical well-being of the people with the result that they can neither throw off nor resist disease. And although during the process from this viewpoint to begin with the report was for immediate medical attention because itself this was the main concern of the laborers. Observation of the general population was revealed an alarming amount of disease due to illness, exposure, undernourishment, unsanitary conditions, and debility due to lack of proper medical care during pregnancy, illness, or at time of injury. The public health official expressed concern that the health care in most (the majority) were respectively poor, no doubt.

Forthcoming tabulations of disabilities among the migrants in San Diego will undoubtedly reflect the seriousness of their health problem. But the natural limitations of such tabulations prevent a complete view of the situation. Undernourishment, over-exposure, and general debilitation cannot be entirely reflected in tabulations of this kind. It is possible for workers to function for relatively long periods of time at extremely low levels of efficiency and debilitation without being aware of specific "disability within the past two months."

Public and private relief agencies in the cotton areas of New Mexico usually cooperate primarily with the workers at local level.

and provide little or no aid to migrants because of the general lack of funds and necessary facilities. Although local physicians report frequent treatment of migrants, gratis, this treatment does not even scratch the surface of the health problem among the mobile population.

The complaints of farm operators and local residents regarding the shiftlessness, irresponsibility, and general uncouthness of the migrant population essentially constitute a listing of symptoms -- symptoms of poor health and bad living conditions. Shiftlessness is more properly correlated with debilitation, chronic illness, and undernourishment than with innate characteristics. Irresponsibility is often exemplified by the fact that migrants tear down parts of barns, sheds, etc., for firewood. More adequate housing facilities could do much to eliminate this type of irresponsibility. And the general rehabilitation of the migrant population through proper housing, adequate medical attention, and increased earning possibilities would prove a basic remedy for uncouthness.

As a practical measure, a healthier and better housed migrant population would contribute substantially to the community by removing the constant threat of epidemic and increasing per capita production among the labor force.

Lack of educational opportunity is the recognized rule among the millions of our unprivileged farm population. The poorer areas of New Mexico offer no exception to this rule.

Complete records on school enrollment and average daily attendance are available only in Dona Ana County. The following analysis consequently applies specifically to that county. The conditions revealed by these records is apparently somewhat less severe in Santa County so far as resident children are concerned. On the basis of inquiries with several school officials in Santa County, it appears that the greater number of large farms, and undoubtedly more prosperous farmers, leads to a smaller decline in average daily attendance during cotton picking time, because fewer children leave school for work in the fields. As far as migrant children are concerned, however, the situation is practically identical in both areas.

In Dona Ana County, for the three school years prior to 1940-41, using September as a base, there were increases in enrollment during October, November, and December ranging from 1.3 to 4.0 percent; and for December, 1939, which shows a relatively high average of 7.45 percent. The enrollment of some migrant children, late enrollment of resident children, and transfers from neighboring counties all contribute to these increases. An opposite trend generally might be expected in enrollment, and again using September as a base, there were slight increases in average daily attendance reaching as high as 16.6 percent for the same school years and during the same three months.

It is evident that although relatively slight increases in enrollment are recorded during the course of cotton harvest, large numbers of local resident children are removed from school during this period as reflected by the substantial decreases shown in the average daily attendance figures. It is to be noted incidentally that greatest decrease in attendance corresponds with the peak cotton picking period in October at each of the three seasons for which complete data appear in the table.

The figures discussed so far evidence withdrawals from school of local resident children. A negligible number of migrant children are enrolled or attend school from the time they arrive in September through the end of December when cotton picking is over. At this time, however, the migrant children begin to figure more prominently in the total enrollment and school attendance. After harvest season, many migrant families remain in the cotton areas of New Mexico with the hope of establishing themselves as permanent residents. And at this time they begin to send their children to school. Enrollment increases for about two months and then begins to taper off as the families find it necessary to leave the area in search of employment. During this two month period the schools suffer the effects of readjusting and readjusted enrollment.

Beginning late in December and continuing through January is the

* Many families remain, however, and become part of the constantly increasing population in both counties.

ENROLLMENT AND AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE IN DONA ANA COUNTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.*

SCHOOL YEAR	Enrollment	Average Daily Attendance	Ratio	Enrollment	Average Daily Attendance	Ratio	Enrollment	Average Daily Attendance	Ratio
1937-38	13,695	1,606,000	116.6	13,710	1,606,000	116.6	13,710	1,606,000	116.6
1938-39	13,549	1,606,000	116.6	13,549	1,606,000	116.6	13,549	1,606,000	116.6
1939-40	13,711	1,606,000	116.6	13,711	1,606,000	116.6	13,711	1,606,000	116.6
1940-41	13,711	1,606,000	116.6	13,711	1,606,000	116.6	13,711	1,606,000	116.6

* Source: County Superintendent of Schools, Dona Ana County.

** Average Daily Attendance.

steady increases in enrollment for the school years 1937-38, 1938-39, and 1939-40. These increases are due primarily to the enrollment of migrant children. At the same time we find very substantial increases in average daily attendance due to the return to school of resident children as well as the influx of migrant children.

The first three months of the 1940-41 school year reveal the same general tendencies.

Based on the data provided by the Dona Ana County Superintendent of Schools, the following table shows in detail the percentage increases and decreases of enrollment and average daily attendance during and immediately following cotton harvest.

The proposals for controlling the flow of migrant labor, effectuating a labor exchange system, and providing improved working and living conditions for migratory workers would have an incidental but significant and salutary effect on the problem of education. A smaller and efficiently employed labor force would be more stable, would suffer less the results of keen competition for jobs, would be enabled to derive more per capita income, and would be relieved of the necessity for sending school children out into the cotton fields. Enrollment *in* school would be more general and attendance more regular; the valleys and peaks of under-attendance and overcrowding would tend to be levelled.

PERCENTAGE INCREASES AND DECREASES
IN ENROLLMENT AND AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE
DOÑA ANA COUNTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS *
(Base - September)

Year	Enrollment	% Change	Enrollment	% Change	Average Daily Attendance	% Change	Average Daily Attendance	% Change	Average Daily Attendance	% Change	Average Daily Attendance	% Change
1937-38	100.0	100.0	1.3	-12.3	2.7	-12.0	3.8	-7.5	10.7	6.2	14.3	
1938-39	100.0	100.0	1.4	-16.6	2.3	-15.8	2.7	-7.1	2.8	5.4	12.3	
1939-40	100.0	100.0	1.5	-18.8	1.2	-14.2	1.8	-7.0	2.2	4.8	11.3	
1940-41	100.0	100.0	0.7	-14.9	1.3	-14.7	-	-	-	-	-	

* Source: Table; County Superintendent of Schools, Dona Ana County.

** Average Daily Attendance.

Many workers report that "I always go to church when I'm home", but do not attend church during the seasonal stay in New Mexico. Churches are inaccessible or their "clothes aren't fittin'" or they have the feeling that they are not welcome among the resident churchgoers. There is only a small and negligible group of migrants that manages to establish some contact with a church during the cotton season. A third group—roughly 50 percent or more of the migratory workers—report that they usually do not attend church. And frequently they volunteer a variety of reasons that are indicative of their depressed social and economic status. In several cases seasonal workers sought out and attended prayer meetings of one of the local Pentadostal sects apparently more for recreational than for religious reasons.

Among the commercialized forms of recreation, the movies is the most accessible and is fairly well attended by the seasonal workers. Many, however, are either too far from town or are not able to afford even the nominal admission fee. Occasionally there is a travelling tent show or carnival. For the most part, however, the migratory workers have no recreation except visiting with neighbors or indulging in non-commercialized activities such as cards, dominoes, ball games, and the like.

It is noteworthy that night clubs, "jook joints", and similar forms of recreation are practically unknown in the cotton areas of New Mexico. Such enterprises could hardly thrive on a migrant population.

RECEIVED

In both of the New Mexico cotton areas studied, there was considerable receptiveness, particularly among smaller farmers, towards the idea of government assistance with respect to the housing problem. Farmers frequently wondered, "Where will the money come from, how will the government get the money, won't the people have to pay it back eventually?" Usually, these questions embraced all of the government's farm programs. And in most of these instances the immediate need for some alleviation of the housing problem overweighed this financial consideration.

In general, farmers who had experienced the difficulties of securing, housing, and retaining migrant labor were favorable to any program that would help relieve this problem. The interviews with farm operators and local officials in both areas would seem to put this group in the majority. Those who had been regularly successful in securing and employing local labor, and those who had solved the problem of housing expressed various attitudes of approval, indifference, and positive opposition. Many of the larger farm owners were, of course, better equipped to house additional labor. Even so, several of these farmers expressed active interest in alleviating the housing problem for the community. In at least one instance, this took the form of suggesting that government grants to farmers for the purpose of building housing units would be more acceptable than government owned camps on government property.

As in other areas in the United States, migrants in New Mexico

are confronted with social ostracism and general antagonism on the part of farm operators and the local population. This antagonism, however, would not seem to have significant bearing on attitudes toward possible housing projects. Indeed, many farmers apparently recognized that one of their outstanding objections to the migrant population - their high turn over and consequent lack of dependability - would be significantly alleviated by sufficient and adequate housing facilities.

It is not to be inferred that opinion was expressed by farmers merely from the perspective of how government assistance would relieve the labor supply problem by providing housing. Expression of opinion frequently took the form of humanitarian concern about the deplorable conditions of the underprivileged migrants. One farmer went so far as to ~~suggest~~ suggest that farm workers were as entitled to some form of parity payment as farm operators.

More opposition to any kind of aid to migrants was encountered among townspeople and local officials than among the farm operators. It is apparent to some extent that this feeling derives from a resentment that the migrant population does not spend its money locally. The opposition of some of the local officials reflected the various problems that a transient population actually or allegedly creates. Although sincerely concerned with the well-being of the migrants, local welfare officials felt that any encouragement to migration by way of better housing would increase the already overtaxed relief facilities. Police officials in both areas reacted to the general disturbance that

the migrants presumably contribute to the community. In one area, a prominent school official had objection to the migrants as a socially undesirable group; an equally prominent official in the other area expressed complete sympathy with the group. Both school officials, however, were concerned about the overcrowding that migration creates in the schools. As has been shown in the above section on education, though overcrowding is somewhat of a problem toward the end of the harvest season, the more serious problem is lack of attendance of both migrant and local resident children during harvest time.

It is to be expected that local opposition will be forthcoming in some measure to any government program of relief to migrants. On the basis of the New Mexico survey, however, it would be reasonable to anticipate a fairly good reception to such a program, especially in view of the threatening labor shortage.

